

**REMARKS before the SENATE FAMILIES AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
NICK CIARAMITARO, DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC POLICY
MICHIGAN AFSCME COUNCIL 25
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Nick Ciaramitaro and I am Director of Legislation and Public Policy for the Michigan AFSCME Council 25.

AFSCME opposes Senate Bills 1173, 1178 and 1179 as harmful to the rights of child care, Home Care, and other workers to organize and bargain collectively over important working conditions and other matters affecting their lives and their livelihood.

Senate Bills 1173 and 1179 amend the Public Employees Relations Act (PERA) by specifically excluding from its provisions workers who receive "a direct or indirect government subsidy in his or her private employment." The bill ignores changes in the economy of the State and the needs of new classes of workers.

Michigan's changing economy has created new, non-traditional jobs. Where work is performed, how it is compensated and the needs of workers and employers alike are changing. Where in the past a worker had a single employer and worked at a single site, today's workers are often compensated differently and working from home.

One of those emerging jobs is that of child care workers. This new profession was generated by public policy changes in the 1990's involving assistance to the unemployed and underemployed. What was known as "Welfare to Work" programs developed that required public assistance recipients to engage in work or work training to continue to qualify for assistance. As many of those receiving assistance were single parents of young children, the effort created a need for child day care greater than that which was available. Added to the increased need was the fact that those in greatest need of this service were people unable to meet the cost of child care as they were engaged in unpaid work preparation programs or low wage entry-level jobs.

At first, the result was a number of children being left without supervision. The State of Michigan quickly realized that no supervision was harmful to the child and posed a risk to society at large. The State also realized that work requirements under the welfare to work effort could be met by employing people in this needed area.

In order to match the needed work with those who needed workers Michigan created a child day care program. As the people who needed to engage child care providers were low income themselves, Michigan subsidized the delivery of that child care service.

Soon, there were several thousand child care workers providing these vital services to Michigan children and parents. These child care providers had no voice in expressing their concerns regarding the quality of the services and the conditions of their work. These child care providers - as well as similarly situated providers such as home care workers - should not be denied a collective voice.

For these reasons, we oppose Senate Bills 1173 and 1179.

AFSCME also opposes House Bills 1178 as redundant and unnecessary. SB 1178 would prohibit the Departments of Human Services and Community Health from requiring an individual to join a union as a condition of receiving a subsidy and requiring the Departments to advise such workers of their right to decline participation in a labor union. A majority of child care providers signed cards and voted to join the union. But Michigan law, as well as federal law, already prohibits compulsory union membership. Any employee who wishes to refrain from membership in a labor union may pay a representation fee rather than union dues.